

## **Family Councils**

The 1987 Nursing Home Reform Act guarantees the families of nursing home residents the right to form a family council. In addition, these councils are usually also open to close friends of residents. Facilities approved for Medicare and Medicaid must provide space for this activity. The facility must appoint a liaison between the staff and the family council, but staff is only allowed to attend by invitation.

Many facilities find that this can be a positive tool for both the families and for the facility. Support can be given to families to help with dealing with issues related to their loved one and give the families a combined voice in the facility. Facilities can address issues that the family council brings to them and can educate family members on facility procedures, activities, and issues. This can be a great benefit for all involved.

One Family Council is located at Sleepy Hollow Manor Nursing Home in Annandale, Virginia and is headed by John Birch. He is interested in initiating an association of family councils. John can be contacted via his website: Friends and Family Council at [www.erols.com/jbirch/ffc](http://www.erols.com/jbirch/ffc).

The Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program has additional resources on Family Councils. Please call our intake line at 703-324-5861 to have information mailed to you.